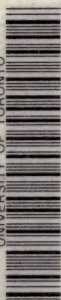


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WILLIAM H. DAVIES



LONDON
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1913

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TO
HELEN AND EDWARD THOMAS

NOTE

SOME time ago I published a book of poems called *The Soul's Destroyer*, which was kindly received. The poems in the present book have been written since, some during my stay in London, others while in the country. I don't think it is necessary to classify them, as the subjects speak for themselves.

W. H. D.

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MARGERY

THE Butterfly loves Mignonette,
And every moment deeper sips ;
When Winds do shake him by his wings,
He fastens tighter with his lips ;
So let the whole world make me shake,
I will not from my true love break.

The bird is perched alone and sings,
Not all the rain can make him stop ;
In sooth he singeth more, as though
He'd sing one note for each rain-drop ;
So, like that bird, to his heart true,
I'll sing through showers that wet me through.

A thousand trees to every house,
A singing bird in every tree ;
And in the midst of these she dwells,
And lives for me—doth Margery ;
Where we can take our sweet love's fill
Shut in a garden green and still.

THE WAYS OF TIME

As far as my own heart's concerned,
I give old Time contempt ; but when
I ask for girls and boys, he brings
Me grey-haired dames and men.

I ask to see a leafy house,
Where Nature almost laughed her way
Right in : he shows me a stone block,
Bare of a leafy spray.

As butterflies are but winged flowers,
Half sorry for their change, who fain,
So still and long they lie on leaves,
Would be thought flowers again—

E'en so my thoughts, that should expand,
And grow to higher themes above,
Return like butterflies to lie
On the old things I love.

I would not care one jot how soon
Death came, had I one day at last
To be again the boy I was,
With children of the past.

Age oft-times grudges me good day ;
Children hallo with pleasant stare :
When I was young one child ne'er failed—
She with the longest hair.

A SAFE ESTATE

IF I hear Robin sing in mirth,
I for no company shall pine ;
Millions of souls, indeed ! on earth—
I know two only, his and mine.
I like Red Robin, he doth draw
More close than many of my kin ;
The last face yestere'en I saw,
His first this morn came peeping in ;
For him my curtain is half drawn,
To follow on the look of Morn.

He who loves Nature truly, hath
His wealth in her kind hands ; and it
Is in safe trust until his death,
Increasing as he uses it ;
'Tis proof 'gainst water, thief, and flame ;
He'll not lay wild hands on his life,
As one who, in his health and prime,
Lets out his blood with a sharp knife,
When of ten ships but nine returned,
Or out of houses ten one burned.

THE LIKENESS

WHEN I came forth this morn I saw
Quite twenty cloudlets in the air ;
And then I saw a flock of sheep,
Which told me how those clouds came there.

That flock of sheep, on that green grass,
Well it might lie so still and proud !
Its likeness had been drawn in heaven,
On a blue sky, in silvery cloud.

I gazed me up, I gazed me down,
And swore, though good the likeness was,
'Twas a long way from justice done
To such white wool, such sparkling grass.

ALE

O WHAT a merry world I see
Before me through a quart of ale :
Now if sometimes that men would laugh,
And women too would sigh and wail—
To laugh or wail's an easy task
For all who drink at my ale-cask.

Life is a shade ; Death wears the flesh ;
But a quart of ale puts flesh on me,
And gives me power then to outgrin
That ugly grinner Death, when he
Doth as some passing shadow seem,
Whereas 'tis *Life* is a thin dream.

Now do I hear thee weep and groan,
Who hath a comrade sunk at sea ?
Then quaff thee of my good old ale,
And it will raise him up for thee ;
Thou'lt think as little of him then
As when he moved with living men.

ALE

If thou hast hopes to move the world,
And every effort it doth fail,
Then to thy side call Jack and Jim,
And bid them drink with thee good ale ;
So may the world, that would not hear,
Perish in hell with all your care.

One quart of good old ale, and I
Feel then what life immortal is :
The brain is empty of all thought,
The heart is brimming o'er with bliss ;
Time's first child, Life, doth live ; but Death,
The second, hath not yet his breath.

Give me a quart of good old ale,
Am I a homeless man on earth ?
Nay, I want not your roof and quilt,
I'll lie warm at the moon's cold hearth ;
No grumbling ghost to grudge my bed,
His grave, ha ! ha ! holds up my head.

THE DISTINCTION

THIS Talent is a slip, or shoot,
Cut off the family tree ;
To train with care and educate,
Which withers if let be.

But Genius is a seed that comes
From where no man doth know ;
Though left uncared, aye, hindered too,
It cannot help but grow.

Talent's an outlet of Life's stream
Whose waters know no change ;
But Genius bringeth in from far
New waters, sweet and strange.

“SCOTTY” BILL

THERE'S “Scotty” Bill, four score of years,
Who, every morning when we rise,
Will swear that summer's not yet come,
And questions us—“Where are the flies?”

His age, methought, unsettled him,
Yet still I felt some strange surprise
When, every day, he damned and raved
That Summer had not brought more flies.

I asked a lodger—“Tell me why
Bill swears, and where his trouble lies.”
“Old Bill makes sticky papers, and
He makes his living catching flies.”

Now what though Summer brings sweet flowers,
They'll not make glad his aged eyes.
Tell him not then that Summer's come,
If she hath come without her flies.

And Bill, he knows a thing or two,
For here he strikes the cursèd cause
That robbed sweet Summer of her flies—
“'Tis those damn sanitation laws.”

With better food, and half a home,
I'd back Bill for a hundred years :
Death failed to blow his light out thrice,
Expecting help from hopeless tears.

THE LAMENT OF AGE

WHY must I dig this old mine still,
Deep in the dark, the damp, and cold,
Just for a speck or two outdoled !
It in my youth gave little toil
To find its top yield nugget gold.

My precious yields they came and went,
My mine worked out in every run :
I hear the young ones making fun,
Who must, alas ! grow old and spent,
And lose their gold as I have done.

The top is rich enough for youth,
Who needs must dig as he grows old—
Deep in the dark, the damp, and cold ;
Until he learns the woful truth—
The more he digs the less his gold.

O shafts and beams that propped upright
This mine for eighty years and more—
For I can count my years four score—
Now that my lamp gives feeble light,
Fall, that the earth may close me o'er !

THE OX

WHY should I pause, poor beast, to praise
Thy back so red, thy sides so white ;
And on thy brow those curls in which
Thy mournful eyes take no delight ?

I dare not make fast friends with kine,
Nor sheep, nor fowl that cannot fly ;
For they live not for Nature's voice,
Since 'tis man's will when they must die.

So, if I call thee some pet name,
And give thee of my care to-day,
Where wilt thou be to-morrow morn,
When I turn curious eyes thy way ?

Nay, I'll not miss what I'll not find,
And I'll find no fond cares for thee ;
So take away those great sad eyes
That stare across yon fence at me.

See you that Robin, by himself,
Perched on that leafless apple branch,
His breast like one red apple left—
The last and best of all—by chance ?

If I do but give heed to him,
He will come daily to my door ;
And 'tis the will of God, not Man,
When Robin cometh there no more.

CATHARINE

WE children every morn would wait
For Catharine, at the garden gate ;
Behind school-time, her sunny hair
Melted the master's frown of care,
What time his hand but threatened pain,
Shaking aloft his awful cane ;
So here one morn we two did wait
For Catharine at the garden gate.
To Dave I say—"There's sure to be
Some coral isle unknown at sea,
And—if I see it first—'tis mine !
But I'll give it to Catharine."
"When she grows up," says Dave to me,
"Some ruler in a far countree,
Where every voice but his is dumb,
Owner of pearls, and gold, and gum,
Will build for her a shining throne,
Higher than his, beside his own ;
And he, who would not list before,
Will listen to Catharine, and adore
Her face and form ; and," Dave went on—
When came a man there pale and wan,

CATHARINE

Whose face was dark and wet though
kind,

He, coming there, seemed like a wind

Whose breath is rain, yet will not stop

To give the parchèd flowers a drop :

“Go, children, to your school,” he said ;

“Alone, for Catharine is dead.”

THE CITY'S WAYS

YE say the City stunts the child,
And robs its bone of half its growth;
And makes less rich the mother's milk,
Which is her baby's blood, forsooth.

Ye say the City drained its blood—
But hath it done no more than that?
What made the child to stone the dog?
What made him pinch and scald the cat?

True, it makes shoulders narrower,
And maketh men as dwarves to be :
But what hath made them worse than
that,
Demons of hell for cruelty?

Wouldst know the City's cruel ways?
The homeless dog and cat do know ;
And bony nags that cannot last
For long the pace they're whipt to go.

Or ask the Ox, strange from green fields,
And from the farmer's kindly ken ;
Now chased to death with curse and blow,
By wild things that do seem like men.

THE CITY'S WAYS

I gave no thought how cruel 'twas,
 Until I saw in kindly keep
The grazing ox, the ploughing horse,
 So stout and strong, and fearless sheep.

A good law, for both man and beast :
 Let all flesh food—for a thousand pities—
Enter to us as lifeless meat,
 And goad no live thing through our cities.

Why think of them, though goaded, cursed,
 Of horses, oxen, sheep, in sooth ;
The City's far more hard on men—
 Some starve, some slave, and some do
 both.

THE FORSAKEN DEAD

WHAT tyrant starved the living out, and kept
Their dead in this deserted settlement !
There is no voice at home, no eyes to look
Down from their windows on these gardens
 wild ;
A tyrant hath refused his people work,
Since they had claimed a right to share his
 spoils,
And they have left their dead forsaken here.
Here will I sit upon this fallen tree,
Beside these ancient ruins, ivy-crowned,
Where Nature makes green mosses ooze and
 spread
Out of the pores of their decaying walls—
Here will I sit to mourn that people gone.
Where are they gone that there's no maiden
 left
To weep the fall of this sweet village lost,
Down where its waters pass the empty mills !
No living thing except one tethered lamb,
That hath been crying full an hour in vain,
And, on that green where children played their
 games,

Hath browsed his circle bare, and bleats to see
More dewy pastures all beyond his reach.

Where is maid Margaret, whom I saw crowned
Queen of the May before so many eyes?

And scornful Maud, of her rare beauty proud—
That cruel rose bud, with her close hard heart,
Between whose folds no mercy drop could
lodge :

And where the men who threw the hammer's
weight,

And leapt this common but three moons ago
When unto heaven they sent a deafening shout
Like wild Pacific, when he leaps and falls

At Raratonga, off a coral reef :

Then, in Life's glorious deep they swam and
laughed,

And felt no nameless substance touch their
limbs

To make them sick with dread of things unseen.
Some other tyrant, in some other shire,
Will drive his people forth, and they will come
Hither, to be this other tyrant's slaves.

Then back, ye famished strangers, or haste on :
There is no joy here, save in one short
change ;

Be warned to see these dead forsaken here.
Had they no dreamer here who might remain

To sing for them these desolated scenes ?
One who might on a starvèd body take
Strong flights beyond the fiery larks in song,
With awful music, passionate with hate ?
Were I that bard, and that poor people mine,
I would make strangers curse that tyrant's day :
Would call on Sleep, compeller of strange
 dreams,
Who leads the unbeliever to the Heaven he
 doubts,
And makes a false one fear the Hell he scorns—
Would call on Sleep to bring him ghastly
 dreams,
And haunt that tyrant's night without repose.

THE DYING

HE fumbles in the clothes for want of thought,
And we, in life, health, fearing death, supply
His dazed brain the power for clearer work—
Imagination to his dying eye.

Locks, bolts, nor bars make coward's heart
secure :

When I at night see stars shine overhead,
And in the morning dew upon the green,
Ah ! then I tremble to lie cold and dead—

That I, whom life showed nothing to make
laugh,

Shall grin at last and know no reason why ;
And have no smell when Summer brings her
flowers,

And have no ear for birds close where I
lie.

TIME'S RULE

TIME called me out of a dark room
In a green place to play ;
He gave me flowers, fruits, and sweets,
I laughed all day.

I sang all day ; I danced ; I moved
With motion light and free :
Like th' little bird whose weight is scarce
More than a bee.

The sunny days made golden years,
Till Time told his fast rule :
“ I send my happy children all
To a good school.”

Then to Experience me he took,
The Master of Life's school ;
Who snatched away my flowers and sweets
And called me fool.

And made me suffer, made me weep,
In daily teen and pain ;
Would I were back, moaned I, in that
Green place again !

Time heard my plaint ; “ that place,” said he,
“ Hath now no fruit or flower.”
“ Then take me back to that dark room
For evermore.”

A FAMILIAR FACE

O FOR an old familiar face,
To see the child outgrow the man !
“ Shun him,” they cry, “ that man from jail :
Shun him, that slave to Bacchus ale ;
Shun him, who swears for all he can.”
Nay, what care I for that ? I trace
My way through him to scenes of joy ;
I know him not as one who spent
Part of his life in jail ; he went
To the same school with me a boy,
Which fills my heart with sweet content.

A thousand times I've set my mind
Sternly 'gainst Bacchus and his race ;
I've seen with pity men go mad,
And women going to the bad ;
But Chance hath brought my way a face
Which shows the boy I love behind.
“ Say, how is little Jane, who went
To school between us two ? ” “ Oh, she
Is well ; and babies ” — “ Babies ! ” “ Three.”
And in the name of wonderment,
Bacchus hath ta'en a hold on me.

A BLIND CHILD

HER baby brother laughed last night,
The blind child asked her mother why ;
It was the light that caught his eye.
Would she might laugh to see that light !

The presence of a stiffened corse
Is sad enough ; but, to my mind,
The presence of a child that's blind,
In a green garden, is far worse.

She felt my cloth—for worldly place ;
She felt my face—if I was good ;
My face lost more than half its blood,
For fear her hand would wrongly trace.

We're in the garden, where are bees
And flowers, and birds, and butterflies ;
One greedy fledgling runs and cries
For all the food his parent sees !

I see them all : flowers of all kind,
The sheep and cattle on the leas ;
The houses up the hills, the trees—
But I am dumb, for she is blind.

THE CALM

A BIRD sings on yon apple bough,
And bees are humming near ; and now
I think of my tempestuous past,
And wonder if these joys will last.
After a storm of many years,
There comes this calm to lay my fears.
In vain it comes : an anxious eye
Looks for a sign in every sky
For tempest ; for it cannot be,
Methinks, that peace will stay with me.
Anon this mind forgets its past,
And then methinks this calm will last.
Then walk I down my lane to see
Sweet Primrose, pale Anemone,
Shy Violet, who hid from sight,
Until I followed a bee right
To her—now while the cries of Spring
Do make things grow, to run and leap.
But are these pleasant days to keep ?
Where shall I be when Summer comes ?
When with a bee's mouth closed, she hums
Sounds not to wake, but soft and deep,
To make her pretty charges sleep ?

THE CALM

As long as Heaven is true to Earth,
Spring will not fail with her green growth,
Nor Autumn with his gold ; but when
Troubles beset me, I seek men ;
From Nature, with her flowers and songs,
To lose myself in human throngs ;
From moonlit glade to limelit scene,
To playhouses from bowers green ;
From mossy rock to painted mortar,
To Traffic's wheels from running water ;
And from the birds' melodious calls
To lose myself in human brawls.

STRANGE PEOPLE

THERE was a man I knew,
Cruel to child and wife ;
To see a pig despatched,
And blood upon a knife,
Made him so sick he retched.

There was a man I knew,
Soft-spoken, he was loved ;
He took a club and struck
A fowl which lived and moved
When he that fowl did pluck.

There was a man I knew,
Refused no stranger ale ;
But Mrs. Jones' head
Wagged with this woful tale—
“ His children moan for bread.

“ A farthing's worth of milk
His little girl goes for,
But quarts of ale drinks he,
And rum and whiskey raw ”—
Said Mrs. Jones to me.

Now these three men I knew,
Were Tom, and Dick, and Dave ;
Dick freely paid for drink,
Till Mrs. Jones she gave
That hint, which made me think.

THE HAPPIEST LIFE

TAKE from the present hour its sweets ;
For, as thou nearest Death's vast sea,
To empty thy Life's river there—
Thou wilt see flowerless banks of sand,
And naked rocks on that drear coast.

We rush through life as though it were
A race to grab new-opened land ;
We live as though Life's pleasures were
Piled at its end, and when 'tis reached,
We moan them passed in years long gone.

We either do outrace old Time
Unto an end where no joys are,
Or lie us down in present ease,
In gluttony, or drunken sloth,
And make Time bear us sleeping on.

Man makes his life a burning fret,
Yet beasts do know a shady spot,
And know what herbs are good ; proud man
Knows not how much, or what to eat,
And drinks fire-juice in Summer's prime.

THE HAPPIEST LIFE

We must clear out our vain desires,
Which covet more than gold can buy ;
We must live more in Nature's way ;
For what we want is th' drunkard's ease
Sans drugs to give us after pain.

We all are one at last ; when Death
Hath glazed the eye of cruel Czar,
Which made so many mortals quail—
Bury it soon from flies. Ye gods,
Flies on that eye which cowed down men !

THE PRIMROSE

No more, from now, called pale and wan,
As though a pitiful weak thing :
A sickly offspring of weak Sun
And youngish Spring.

Thy father's golden skin is thine,
And his eye's gleam ; but his bold rays
Are tempered by thy mother's blood
To softer ways.

For thou hast made the banks ooze gold,
And made old woods their darkness break ;
In them I would not fall at night
Wert thou awake.

Here is the Primrose family :
The first born is full blown and tall ;
Two in half bloom just reach his chin,
Three are buds small.

Then, since the first born healthy seems—
No drooping one I've chanced upon—
It would be speaking false to call
Them pale and wan.

THE PRIMROSE

They mean the Primrose plucked and withered,
Not growing in his golden shine,
Who'd prove by him how Phyllis looks
When she doth pine.

Indeed, where find a hardier flower?
Born when the Spring wind chilly blows,
Still beautiful in Summer's days—
O rare Primrose !

THE HOMELESS MAN

WAKE up yon wretch in rags,
Remove such filthy bags
From doorsteps clean enough :
Seems like some shaming stuff
That scavengers must take
Early, ere people wake.

The homeless man his mind
Is like old Autumn's wind,
Who here and there in doubt
Doth cast his leaves about,
Against high banks some thrown,
And some in water blown.

So with the homeless one ;
The Law must move him on,
For did he sit to sleep
He might fall in Death's deep—
So shocking to the eye
Of decent passers-by.

A tunnel traveller he :
No sight of sunny lea,
No bursting to the light ;
This traveller of the night,
No glimpse of heaven doth know—
But woe, for ever woe.

THE HOMELESS MAN

A trespasser is he,
Wherever others see :
The child would pelt his bones,
As one—they'd hurl their stones—
With homeless dog or cat,
And only fear stops that.

With prayer-books in their hand,
Where beggar takes his stand,
Church people hurry past ;
Perchance one comes at last
With jug to fetch some ale,
He'll hear the beggar's tale.

Six butterflies take hours
To suck such sweets from flowers
As one bee in less time :
Work's want is beggar's crime ;
Who'll give employ to one
Worn to a rag and bone ?

VIOLET TO THE BEE

O you false knight in shining mail,
Who visited my early hours—
My days are numbered by your scorn,
Since Beauty spurns Love's flowers.

For true my charms are withered much,
And dry my body is and lax ;
My eye like to a burning wick
That doth outlast its wax ;

But for old times' sake look on me,
On your first love, who ne'er did fail
To give sweet favours when you came
'Scaped out of Winter's jail.

Only Primrose was here and I
When April turned to hard hail-stones
The soft rain-drops, and you did make
In pity such deep groans.

But now the earth is peopled more,
And you have power to make love's
choice ;
You are much occupied these days,
I know it by your voice.

VIOLET TO THE BEE

For when you lie on bosoms fair,
In blissful moments, you are dumb ;
Which proves to me your many loves,
Since you now seldom hum.

You're in your highest heaven just now,
In apple blossoms overhead ;
And your sweet sting it is will make
Those blossoms apples red.

Ah ! I care not how soon Death comes,
To bury me on this steep bank ;
This flower of Life in other hand
'Than Love's—Oh, it smells rank !

IN JUNE

I'LL enter into June's cool house,
Where leaves shade over her spring's run ;
Sure, but one thing that breathes, the lark,
Dare now have dealings with the sun ;
Embolden'd with such sparkling dew,
He'll do in heaven as he choose.

There is a wood, with leafy boughs,
Not too far down the hawthorn lane ;
When I am in the sun can knock
Its roof or side, and knock in vain ;
Autumn will bring him by-and-by
Some leafless woods wherein to lie.

The little brook beside the road,
Though running oft from shade to shade,
Is warming still ; but if I sleep,
Perchance, when in that shaded glade,
The faith is mine that June can keep
Out sun or shower, till ends my sleep.

WONDERING BROWN

THERE came a man to sell his shirt,
A drunken man, in life low down !
When Riley, who was sitting near,
Made use of these strange words to Brown.

“ Yon fallen man, that’s just gone past,
I knew in better days than these ;
Three shillings he could make a day,
As an adept at picking peas.”

“ God help us all ! I never heard—
’Tis scarce believable,” said Brown ;
“ To think that man was what you say,
And now to be so low and down !

“ Now, Riley, had another told me,
What you have just remarked,” said
Brown,

“ I would have doubted—help us, Heaven !
That ’tis as you have said ”—cried Brown.

WONDERING BROWN

“ You’d scarcely credit it, I knew
A man in this same house, low down,
Who owns a fish-shop now—believe
Me, or believe me not,” said Brown.

“ He was a civil sort of cove,
But did queer things, for one low down :
Oft have I watched him clean his teeth—
As true as Heaven’s above !” cried
Brown.

MUSIC

LET Fortune gift on gift bestow
When Music plays it bringeth woe
For something dearer Time hath ta'en,
Which never can be ours again.
The aged beggar-man hath heard,
And tear-drops trickle down his beard
For loss of kinder looks and home,
And days that never more can come.
Here in this smoky capital,
With scarce aught seen but grimy wall
And human faces—bring to me,
Music, the things of old : the bee
Humming as Summer's months were three,
Winter had nine ; bring birds and flowers,
And the green earth of childhood's hours,
With sparkling dew at early morn ;
The murmuring streams ; and show the corn :
And break its golden roof to show
Poppies and blueflowers where they grow.
O happy days of childhood, when
We taught shy Echo in the glen
Words she had never used before—
Ere Age lost heart to summon her.

MUSIC

Life's river, with its early rush,
Falls into a mysterious hush
When nearing the eternal sea :
Yet we would not forgetful be,
In these deep, silent days so wise,
Of shallows making mighty noise
When we were young, when we were gay,
And never thought Death lived—that day.

FACTS

ONE night poor Jim had not a sou,
Mike had enough for his own bed ;
“Take it : I’ll walk the streets to-night,”
Said Mike, “and you lie down instead.”

So Mike walked out, but ne’er came back ;
We know not whether he is drowned,
Or used his hands unlawfully ;
Is sick, or in some prison bound.

Now Jim was dying fast, and he
Took to the workhouse his old bones ;
To earn some water, bread, and sleep,
They made that dying man break stones,

He swooned upon his heavy task :
They carried him to a black coach,
And tearless strangers took him out—
A corpse ! at the infirmary’s porch.

Since Jesus came with mercy and love,
’Tis nineteen hundred years and five :
They made that dying man break stones,
In faith that Christ is still alive.

NEW-COMERS

So many birds have come along,
The nightingale brings her sweet song,
With lease to charm, by her own self,
The nights of this best month in twelve.
To sit up all a night in June
With that sweet bird and a full moon—
The moon with all Heav'n for her worth,
The nightingale to have this earth,
And there we are for joy—we three.
And here's the swallow, wild and free,
Prince flyer of the air by day ;
For doth he not, in human way,
Dive, float and use side strokes, like men
Swimming in some clear lake? And then,
See how he skates the iceless pond !
And lo ! the lark springs from the land ;
He sees a ladder to Heaven's gate,
And, step by step, without abate,
He mounts it singing, back and forth ;
Till twenty steps or more from earth,
On his return, then without sound
He jumps, and stone-like drops to ground.

NEW-COMERS

And here are butterflies ; poor things
Amazed with new-created wings ;
They in the air-waves roll distress
Like ships at sea ; and when they rest
They cannot help but ope and close
Their wings, as babies with their toes.
Since these new things have come along,
Robin I did forget, whose song
Cheered me in winter ; till I heard
The angry voice of that proud bird.
If Robin hath a fiery show,
The bold brown sparrows well do know
That he hath too a fiery heart—
And they know how to take their part.
When Robin guards his young, I'd be
Not twice his size upon his tree.

PARTED

ALACK for life !

Worn to a stalk since yesterday
Is the flower with whom the bee did stay,
And he was but one night away.
Alack for life, I say.

Alack for life !

A flower put on her fine array,
In hopes a bee would come her way,
Who's dying in his hive this day.
Alack for life, I say.

Alack for life !

If Death like Love would throw his dart
And pierce at once a double heart,
And not to strike away one part—
Alack for life, who'd say ?

THE END OF SUMMER

THE Dandelion sails away,—

Some other port for him next spring ;
Since they have seen the harvest home,
Sweet birds have little more to sing.

Since from her side the corn is ta'en,
The Poppy thought to win some praise ;
But birds sang ne'er a welcome note,
So she blushed scarlet all her days.

The children strip the blackberry bush,
And search the hedge for bitter sloe ;
They bite the sloes, now sweet as plums —
After Jack Frost had bit them so.

'Twas this Jack Frost, one week ago,
Made watchdogs whine with fear and cold ;
But all he did was make fruits smell,
And make their coats to shine like gold

THE END OF SUMMER

No scattering force is in the wind,
 Though strong to shake the leaf from stem ;
The leaves get in the rill's sweet throat,
 His voice is scarcely heard through them.

The darkest woods let in the light,
 And thin and frail are looking now ;
And yet their weight is more than June's,
 Since nuts bend down each hazel bough.

THE JOLLY TRAMP

I AM a jolly tramp : I whine to you,
Then whistles till I meet another fool.
I call the labourer sir, the boy young man,
The maid young lady, and the mother I
Will flatter through the youngest child that
walks.

In sooth, there's no joy in a poor man's house,
Save when the little baby walks or swears ;
Still do they pity my pretended grief.
When, like that fallen oak stripped of its bark,
Showing the naked muscles of its limbs
Flat on the ground—I lie with my coat off,
Hidden in deep green grass that's high enough
To miss a baby in, I pity half the world.
If it be summer time, then what care I
For naked feet, and flesh through tattered
garb ?

O foolish Pride, discomfort is thy due ;
That made a savage take an axe to chop
His feet that were too large to fit small shoes.
What though I read few books, I can read men,

THE JOLLY TRAMP

And weigh a face for what the heart is worth.
Far better than the fools who think they know.
So that the sun shines bright, I like to rest
All day, to let the body lie in sloth,
And make imagination do the work ;
Such work is sweet, and brings no sweat or
ache.

Their questions and their pity make me laugh,
But idle men can always find excuse.
Alas ! I do not always laugh : for see
How fine was yester morn ; the heavens clear ;
Then came a golden cloud with three dark
ones—

Three pirates following a peaceful barque ;
The heavy rain tugged with its might for hours,
And almost pulled the heavens down to earth ;
And then came torrents, and no jolly tramp
Was I, but whined in truth most pitiful.

ONE WE LOVE

THOU miser, Time, who gave to me
Some vigour, grace, and youth more dear—
They were not gifts, but debts and loans,
Which I repay thee year by year ;
E'en thou, false Time, were not reproved,
Did I grow old with one I loved.
Go, Fame, whose voice is from high hills
'Tis death to climb and much heartburn ;
Not worldly wealth, nor temporal power,
Nor future hopes shall serve my turn—
Not me again shall either move,
So I grow old with one I love.
In ocean's depths, how rude is life,
They murder there and make no sound !
Wild beasts are dying off the land,
And now 'tis man gives man his wound :
But there's one joy none can disprove—
Tis to grow old with one we love.

SATURDAY NIGHT IN THE SLUMS

WHY do I stare at faces, why,
Nor watch the happy children more?
Since Age has now a blackened eye,
And that grey hair is stained with gore.

For an old woman passed, and she
Would hide her face when I did stare,
But when she turns that face from me,
There's clotted blood in her grey hair.

Aye, here was hell last night to play,
The scream of children, murder cries;
When I came forth at early day,
I saw old Age with blackened eyes.

Why do I stare at people so,
Nor watch the little children more,
If one such brutal passions show,
And joy is all the other's store?

O for the shot in some fierce land,
A sword or dagger firmly held:
No brutal kick, no mauling hand,
No horrors of the partly killed.

SATURDAY NIGHT IN THE SLUMS

There is the man with brutal brow,
The child with hunger's face of care :
The woman—it is something now
If she lose pride to dress her hair.

I will give children my best hours,
And of their simple ways will sing :
Just as a bird heeds less old flowers
And sings his best to buds in spring

THE TOOTHACHE

LAST night, though I had fifty souls,
I had been bankrupt ere the day ;
 And all because this body slight
 That ill maintained its spirit's light
Had made me swear my souls away ;

Had sent them humming into hell :
And all because an ivory mite
 Was by a nerve-surge pounded, bent,
 And by fierce lightnings blasted, rent,
That made the force of Nature slight.

I never heard Love's voice sound harsh,
Until it sought to soothe this evil ;
 And when it said—" Pray, do not fret :
 Be patient and—sure cure—forget,"
I could not help cry out—" The Devil !"

APRIL

WHAT happy shouts the children make,
Since April brought them his warm rains !
When this same April showers his hail
At their red cheeks behind glass panes,
They know he pelts without avail.

The blossoms drenched, leaves dripping wet,
'Tis for one moment dark as night ;
Then comes a rainbow in the sky,
And Nature laughs, as children might,
Who had a notion once to cry.

Now, over rocks and down ravines,
And venturing into mazy nooks,
The Rill doth find his way about ;
And into many a cave he looks,
And laughs—as he knew his way out.

Who can help laugh at April's ways ?
We laugh the more the more he tries
To mimic some old bogey's face
Under the sunshine of such eyes,
Wherein the thoughts give merry chase.

APRIL

They would have fields without young lambs,
Or amber clear of beauty stains ;
They would have seas without foam-flowers,
Who would want April free from rains,
And cloudless his capricious hours.

He shows my lady's shoes in full,
And makes her form to sway with grace ;
Which makes her pout with some annoy,
But soon come dimples in her face,
And music in her voice of joy.

The laughing girls, half blind and choked,
Are smothered in their own wild hair ;
He took one maiden's yard of it,
When too close I was passing there,
And whipt my cheeks all red with it.

Now Violet is on the bank,
And Primrose is not far away ;
The Brook doth o'er his margents froth—
The Wind doth drive him sore this day,
And pucks his face with childish wrath.

We all must sing when April's here,
Must sing his shine, and sing his shower ;
The lark, the throstle, blackbird sing,
Nor shall their throats improve this hour
In many days of practising.

APRIL

To smell Primrose's honey-well,
I would go mad as any bee :
But vain for me come flowers in Spring,
The Violet, Daffodil to see,
With birds that best in April sing.

WHISKEY

WHISKEY, thou blessèd heaven in the brain,
O that the belly should revolt,
To make a hell of afterpain,
And prove thy virtue was a fault !

Did ever poet seek his bed
With a sweet phrase upon his lips
Smiling—as I laid down my head,
Pleased after sundry whiskey sips ?

I pitied all the world : alas
That no poor nobodies came near,
To give to them my shirt and shoes,
And bid them be of goodly cheer.

A blessèd heaven was in the brain ;
But ere came morn the belly turned
And kicked up hell's delight in pain—
This tongue went dry, this throat it burned.

Oh dear ! Oh dear ! to think last night
The merriest man on earth was I,
And that I should awake this morn,
To cough and groan, to heave and sigh !

HOPE ABANDONED

THE drinking man maybe hath gold, and then
Ofttimes he vomits food before starved men :
But one I met had seedy clothes which shone,
So many suns had poured their fires upon.

Man ! king of that strange world where none
bend knee,
Whose subjects pay mock reverence to thee—
The Shadows, Coloured Imps, Fantastic Crews
Swarming a hulk condemned that rolls in
boose :

Enchanter Drink ! the world's half, small and
great,
Mock Death by lying fearless in Death's state ;
They pawn their finest tools : they know not
what
In life there is to make, why they should not.

Thou leering Imp, create of flame and fume,
Who quenched such hopes as did yon mind
illumine,
Now, like a babe, he is near blind again,
And sees but from one corner of his brain.

HOPE ABANDONED

The light of Love, though it from Heaven
came,

It cannot now outburn Lust's fiercer flame;
This man would do a shameful deed at once,
Were he not saved from it by blessèd Chance.

Now, as the cuckoo, where he holds no
right,

Attempts to put the lawful young to flight,
So I with my own reason would essay
That mind, to scatter its own thoughts away.

And so began: "Canst thou, O man, find
naught

Above in Heaven or under worth thy thought?
Why waste Life's flower, and leave behind no
seed,

When such sweet joy is in pure thought and
deed?

Thou canst not know life as a pleasant
thing,

Though much to practise sham manœuvring;
Or know of Nature with her glint and peep
Of flowers and dewy fields, and brooks that
leap.

HOPE ABANDONED

Thou canst escape these slums in half a mile
For works of Art, and Music to beguile :
See hoary buildings with Time's frosted towers,
Midst spaces green and young in summer
hours.

There's beauty in our streets, and beauty seen
From river's banks that are no longer green ;
Barges half sunk with bales of golden hay,
Or coals that sparkle more in sunny ray.

I passed a carvèd porch in yonder street,
To hear a woman's voice half-timid, sweet ;
Then heard a wondrous chorus burst to end,
When, confident in numbers, many blend.

There's music in the leaves, the shaken tree ;
Aye, in the ocean, cruel though it be—
That will not leave the poor drowned boy
unmoved,
But cuts with rocks that face his mother loved.

The waves that splash the sides of iron ships,
When the lone watch at night with whistling
lips
Paces the deck in tune ; and in the tones
Of rills, for ever polishing their stones.

HOPE ABANDONED

To hear the larks when higher than yon
cloud,
A gale of music's blowing in heaven loud ;
Or hear the mavis when the bees' time come
At eve to take their bags of honey home.

'Tis music takes from toiler's sweat the burn,
Carries the labourer's load ; there's music
stern
When clouds do thunder in the mountain's
caves
Sounds heard by trembling vales below, and
waves.

Hear how the axes make melodious ring
In winter, and the woodmen stir in spring,
When cracks the ice so loud, and flood-time
floats
Vasts forests down to fill the deep-sea boats.

As light is first to take the infant's eyes,
So Music brings his ears their first surprise,
Who then in sport will toss his toes and
bounce,
And would outleap the mother's arms at
once.

HOPE ABANDONED

Nay, why say more? with all these charms
 around,
Scenes for thine eyes, and for thine ears such
 sounds ;
Yet dost thou blind those precious orbs from
 choice,
And into gibberish turn that human voice.

I know thy fall : those sins we grow to love
Were only done at first that Youth might
 prove
Courage to follow Age ; which now at last
Are sinful habits that have bound him fast,

So came thy sins at first, and made thee
 bound,
Till Death shall surely find thee—as he found
The clammy thing that hid its life away,
Hutched in a hollowed rock from day to day.

A bite of food, a pot of ale or stout,
A murder every day to talk about—
And though the sun with crimson fills the sky
Thou wilt not raise thine eyes to him on
 high."

HOPE ABANDONED

Said he : “ Are they more wise who sigh and
weep,
To hear the drunkard laugh, and see him
sleep?
Drink frees a mortal from the Future’s dread,
And lays the Past of all its ghostly dead.

There live some spirits made so fine and frail,
Who strive for joy and all their efforts fail.
Must steep their minds in some dark deadening
stain,
Be mad awhile, or else till Death insane.

Give to the child a faded flower to be
From home to school its only company,
’Tis well content—though once or twice is
heard
That simple voice cry wonder to a bird.

The urchin in his fancy slays galore
To keep his mouth in sweetmeats every hour :
And such is Childhood, that clear well to
drink,
Ere Wisdom’s toad hath chanced upon its
brink

HOPE ABANDONED

When Age complains the year is weeping
leaves,
They're tossed to give him sport—a child
believes ;
Who sees a sparkle warm on ice and snow,
And thinks Jack Frost the merriest wight to
know.

Youth comes with all his hopes ; the loss of
few
Makes others left more spirited to do :
As one at war sees comrades stricken down,
And feels their spirits work to help his own.

The hopeful youth believes to rap until
He'll make the world give answer to his will :
As Woodpecker makes the oak's heart to fear,
And cry aloud for all the woods to hear.

Now count those small mechanics where they
toil
To show above the sea their coral isle :
As well count them as count youth's many
schemes
To thwart Old Age, who frowns on his young
dreams.

HOPE ABANDONED

When our young days are o'er, Life's sad in
sooth :

To change his place with that poor homeless
youth

Whose chattering teeth can sing away the cold,
The grey-haired millionaire would give his
gold.

Those days are gone : think of those winters
told,

When Youth's warm blood did ne'er complain
of cold ;

And dost thou make new friends the present
day.

'Tis but to talk of old friends passed away.

Had I not hopes to feed one fond Desire,
Till Dark Despair gave me a torch of fire—
Intoxication—bade me burn my brain
And body up, for joy to kill my pain ?

I heard the voice of Fame, and I did come
To these loud parts, where ever is her home ;
And day and night sought those sweet favours
she

Conferred on ones less worthy, scorning me.

HOPE ABANDONED

For one drop's sake to scent Time's robe, I
sought :

Distilled a hundred flowers and one of
Thought ;

And still to fail, though they who set the word
In hopes a thought would venture in were
heard.

Life, like that berg from Polar seas, doth
show

A smiling top, with horrors hid below ;

A virgin soil to mine, and it appears

Fools find the gold and wise men stones for
tears.

A thing of beauty shall created be,

Methought, and I will then sit quietly,

And in old age enjoy its sound : of course,

Necessity prevents that deed by force.

And still I struggled, struggled still to fail,

Deep thinking night and day without avail

Until I came to herd with hopeless men,

To drink with them through lost ambition
then.

HOPE ABANDONED

And oft when Inspiration came from Heaven
free,

I let the sacred fire die out of me,
Since dribbling drunkards came and hemmed
me in,

And sober men as bad who laughed at sin.

And then my soul with wonder ceased to burn,
Nor sweet surprises startled me each turn :
Age early found me ; Fancy hid her stores ;
Self dared my Thoughts to venture out of
doors.

I have gone past my hunger now for joy,
The pleasantries of other men annoy ;
I envy them the shining of their lives,
And mope in darkness as a bird that grieves.

As that vexed Owl, on top of his dark tree,
Seeing the moon above, looks down to see
The Hunter dares to burn night fires—will
shout

Till morn, and hoot till both their fires are out.

Here in these slums to sleep and wake again,
Fretted at night by brutal cries of pain,
Year after year : I who alone had hours
With Nature to share woods and fields of
flowers.

HOPE ABANDONED

In this strange world of little spaces, where
The millions starve, and die for want of
air ;

Yet mighty wastes that have for ages lain
Silent to hear the step of man in vain.

Here in these crowded marts where reeks the
stain

On bloody stalls of creatures newly slain ;
On those red lumps the starvers stare with
might,
And well-fed people wish no fairer sight.

Hear how the brook will cease to shout and
rave,

Passing the willow's deep and teary grave ;
Who soon forgets to make his little moans,
To find more shallows wait with heaps of
stones.

But all Life's play and game is left behind,
I out of this sad pool no way can find ;
Though hunger doth not make a man his
prey,

Foul air will never leave him night or day.

HOPE ABANDONED

Sweet Nature hath her slums, where crowds of
 flowers
Can thrive, and not make short each other's
 hours ;
Where swarmèd birds can for their young
 provide,
And no life pales, save pallor be its pride.

Whilst wooing Fame in this her native town,
Death stripped my home, and struck my dear
 ones down :
Death hath his duty, and it would not fail
Though all the infants in the world did wail.

When young thou dost delay returning home,
Thinking the greater joy at last to come ;
But never more will come those moments
 dear
Of kinder eyes and voices sweet to hear.

The farther Life goes on more clear his eye
To probe the past and glean Time's mystery :
But Time will never tell what Death hath
 done—
We can but guess—with thy belovèd one.

HOPE ABANDONED

When she who gave thee birth lies cold and
dead,

And thou hast found no hand or voice instead—
No hand to lay that gentle spirit down,
No voice to answer for thy cheerless own :

Old age brings then no twilight hour for thee,
Remembrances as stars to Memory ;
And now thou knowest where Death's sting can
be,
And how the grave hath made its victory.

'Tis true great spirits are by Sorrow taught,
With intervals to make their feelings thought ;
The world, indifferent to the man, would
know—
So true that happy spirits feign such woe.

What time the vine's roots reached the sewer's
drains,
There grew more grapes than grew in former
reigns ;
The flower that lives most in the shade, and
leaf
Grow large, as doth a human mind in grief.

HOPE ABANDONED

But rain without a break succeeding rain,
Will wash the buried seed out, rot the grain,
Make genius blind whose mind is with the lark
To see the dawn while others are in dark.

The man doth choose his star, and if he fail
Inhabit that, what shall to him avail
A thousand others that would give him home?
Give him his star, or let the darkness come ! ”

He ceased : he who had fallen in the strife,
And might have sucked some honey out of
 life
And lodged it in the world's hive to its joy—
But failed, since none would give his brain
 employ.

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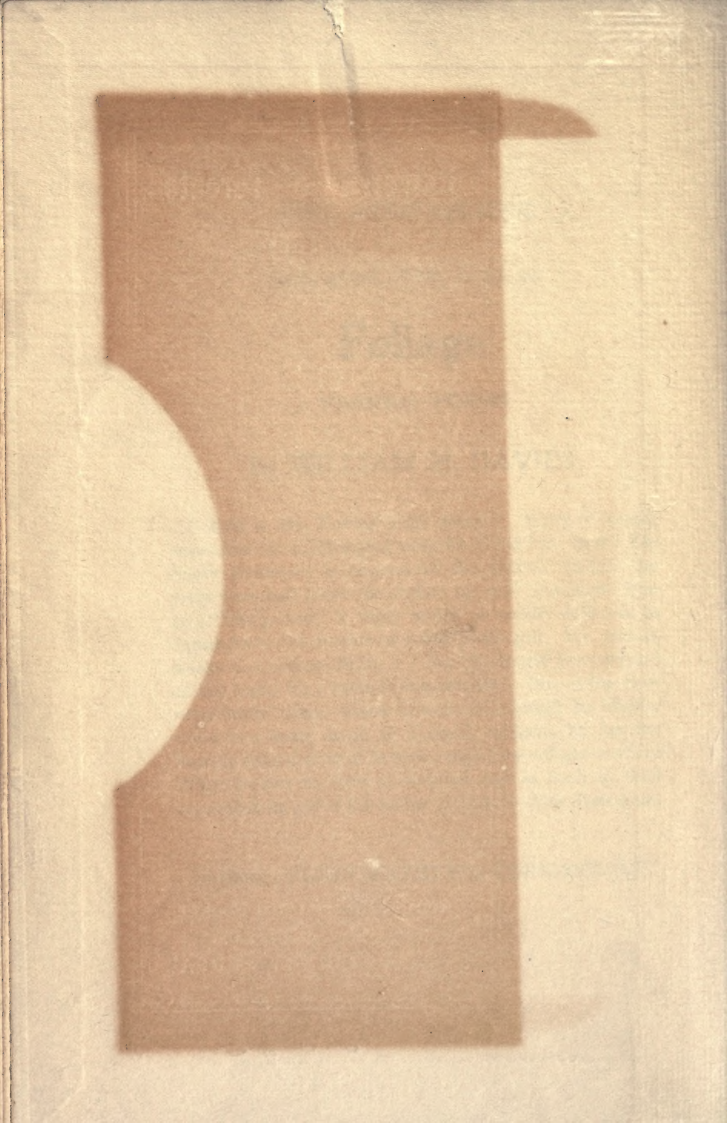
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